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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 000347

SIPDIS

FROM THE AMBASSADOR
DEPT FOR ACTING A/S CARTER
LONDON FOR ACTING A/S CARTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2019
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - CAPITALIZING ON TFG'S MOVE TO MOGADISHU
ON EVE OF FEBRUARY 26 - 27 ICG

REF: A. NAIROBI 246
[1](#)B. NAIROBI 345

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger. Reasons:
1.4 (b,d).

[1](#)1. (C) The February 21 confirmation of a clan-sensitive cabinet by the transitional Parliament in Djibouti (septel) and the near-immediate, February 22 move of President Sheikh Sharif and his government to Mogadishu offer an important opportunity for the USG to cement its relationship with the new Somali administration and improve the unity government's chances of success as it begins the challenging task of establishing itself in the Somali capital. We have cultivated a good relationship with President Sharif, Prime Minister Sharmarke, and many of the newly-anointed cabinet members, and believe we are well-positioned to offer them frank advice as they begin the delicate business of reaching out to their opponents, some of whom we consider to be terrorists.

[1](#)2. (C) In a February 19 telephone call, I urged President Sharif to assemble a balanced cabinet, and it appears that his 36 minister-level appointees (septel) have been appointed in compliance with the 4.5 clan formula, and took into account regional and political considerations. It was apparent in the telephone call, and in our other interactions with him, that Sharif sees the USG as a key partner. He thanked us sincerely for our presence in Djibouti during the presidential succession, and said our numerous frank conversations had informed his deliberations on selecting the prime minister and cabinet. Even if we discount some of this as telling us what we want to hear, we should take Sharif at his word and move to exert constructive leverage to shape an outcome that produces the moderate, national government that we would like to see. If we are to exploit that leverage, concrete assistance to the newly-minted government is essential.

[1](#)3. (C) The immediate task facing the Sharif government will be security. As reftel noted, the situation in Somalia remains fraught with peril. The urgent creation and deployment of a capable joint security force would help the unity government address some of the most pressing threats. The Department has identified \$5 million for aid to the joint force, and we must move expeditiously to begin a program of support. In our February 19 telephone conversation, Sheikh Sharif joined his predecessors in once again politely urging the USG to provide aid for the difficult security challenges his government is facing. Besides appealing for our help standing up the planned joint security force, he applauded our continued assistance to AMISOM, for which he also pledged his support. As we all know, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) failed in part because it had too little

money to supply food, water, and medicine, much less to pay the troops' salaries. If Sharif's government is to have a fighting chance, it must not be tripped up by the same problems.

14. (C) The February 26 - 27 International Contact Group meeting on Somalia offers a timely opportunity to highlight the need for tangible support from the international community, and to preview concrete actions that the USG will be taking in support of the unity government. I urge that every effort be made to identify commitments that the USG will make in support of the joint security forces with the \$5 million we have earlier identified for that task. In ref b, we have suggested other, more expansive ways in which the Sharif government might be supported.
RANNEBERGER